

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5639

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As of March 30, 2011

**Title:** An act relating to education governance.

**Brief Description:** Creating a student-focused state-level education governance system.

**Sponsors:** Senators McAuliffe, Tom, Eide, Harper, Prentice and Shin; by request of Governor Gregoire.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/02/11. 2/10/11.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

**Staff:** Susan Mielke (786-7422)

**Background:** The early learning, K-12, and higher education systems have a number of state-level agencies, councils, and boards. One of them is constitutionally-established.

Department of Early Learning (DEL). The DEL was created by the Legislature in 2006 for the primary purpose of implementing state early learning policy and coordinating, consolidating, and integrating child care and early learning programs in order to administer programs and funding as efficiently as possible. DEL oversees and regulates child care licensing and supports other early learning state and federal programs; child care licensing rate setting, and improving quality standards; background checks for licensed and certified child care; hearings appealing DEL actions; performance standards for the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP); subsidy programs that help families pay for child care; Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT), for children birth to three with disabilities; and early home visiting programs. The Director of DEL is appointed by the Governor.

Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC). The ELAC was established by the Legislature in 2007 to advise DEL on statewide early learning needs and develop a statewide early learning plan. Twenty-three members are specified in statute.

Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI). The SPI was created in the state Constitution in 1889 and under the Constitution has supervision over all matters pertaining to the public schools of the state. Additionally, the SPI has specific statutory duties, including but not

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limited to gathering and reporting school information to state and federal authorities; preparing specifically requested reports each year, and providing other entities of state government with information for policymaking and budget preparation as needed; securing needed laws and appropriations from the state and federal governments and implementing those statutes enacted; distributing funds to local school districts and educational service districts (ESD); approving and monitoring the nine ESDs and 295 local school districts' expenditure budgets; administering the state School Construction Assistance Program and other grant programs; providing facilities services, and assisting local school districts with boundary issues; providing technical help in finance and curriculum matters to the ESDs and school districts; monitoring and conducting consultation in areas such as basic education, assessment, curriculum development aligned with the EALRs, special needs programs for special student populations, and educational technology; issuing certificates for teachers, support personnel, and administrators of the K-12 system; and representing the interests and needs of education dealing with technology, environmental, arts, and partnership issues by serving on various state boards.

The Attorney General in a formal opinion found that the Legislature has discretion to prescribe the specific duties of the SPI and to create agencies and institutions to administer the state's public education system; however, it must respect the constitutional language granting the Superintendent supervisory power over the public school system. The Legislature may not delegate to another officer or agency the supervision authority of the SPI over the public schools. The constitutional authority of the SPI cannot be made subordinate to that of another officer or body. (AGO 1998 No. 6; and AGO 1961-62 No. 2)

State Board of Education (SBE). The SBE was established by the Washington Territorial Legislature in 1877. The SBE consists of 16 members – five elected by school board members, seven appointed by the Governor, the SPI, one elected by private schools, and two (nonvoting) students. The SBE's statutory purpose is to provide advocacy and strategic oversight of public education; implement a standards-based accountability framework that creates a unified system of increasing levels of support for schools in order to improve student academic achievement; provide leadership in the creation of a system that personalizes education for each student and respects diverse cultures, abilities, and learning styles; and promote achievement of the goals. Additional duties of the SBE include providing a broad leadership role in strategic oversight and policy for K-12 education; and establishing rules, standards, and guidelines for minimum high school graduation requirements, minimum basic education requirements, and private school approval.

Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB). The PESB was established in statute in 2000. The PESB has 13 members (the SPI, plus 12 gubernatorial appointees). The purpose of the PESB is to establish policies and requirements for the preparation and certification of educators that provide standards for competency in professional knowledge and practice in the areas of certification; a foundation of skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to help students with diverse needs, abilities, cultural experiences, and learning styles to meet or exceed the student learning goals. Specific statutory duties include advising the Governor, Legislature, and SPI; establishing policies, requirements and standards for educator preparation programs and educator certification; and administering assessments for pre-certification basic skills and subject knowledge assessments and professional-level certification.

Educational Service Districts (ESDs). There are nine ESDs that provide regional services to local school districts, and assist the SPI, SBE, and other state educational agencies in performance of their duties. They were created in statute in 1969. Each ESD is governed by a seven or nine member board of directors that are elected by the school boards within the ESD. Specific statutory duties include providing budget, informational services, and professional development to local schools districts; providing direct services to students (special education, nurse corp, regional transportation coordinators, etc.); and providing professional development services as directed by the Legislature. The ESDs are authorized to pay up to \$100 for membership in a statewide association for each ESD board member.

Office of the Education Ombudsman (OEO). The OEO was created in statute in 2006 to provide information to parents, students, and others regarding their rights and responsibilities with respect to the state's public elementary and secondary education system, and advocate on behalf of elementary and secondary students. The OEO is located in the Office of the Governor and the Education Ombudsman is appointed by the Governor. Additional statutory duties of the OEO are to provide general information to students, families, and communities regarding the school system; help resolve conflict between families and schools; and provide policymakers with recommendations to improve the education system.

Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB). The WSSB was established in statute in 1886 with the primary purpose of educating and training visually impaired children. The WSSB is under the direction of a superintendent appointed by the Governor. A board of trustees, also appointed by the Governor, advises the superintendent.

State Center for Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss (CDHL). The CDHL was originally created in statute in 1886 as the Washington State School for the Deaf with the primary purpose of educating and training hearing impaired children. The school's mission was broadened and its name changed in 2009. The center is under the direction of a director appointed by the Governor. A board of trustees, also appointed by the Governor, advises the director.

Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA). The WSSDA is comprised of all 1477 school board members from Washington State's 295 public school districts. Originally founded in 1922 as a private association but in 1947 it was established in statute as a state agency. The statutory purpose of the WSSDA is to provide leadership, coordination of programs, advocacy, and services to support public school boards of directors. Specific duties assigned to the WSSDA include providing materials and educational services to its members; maintaining multiple consultant resources to assist school boards in their work; implementing an active governmental relations program to communicate school directors' views to state education policymakers, and convening a wide array of committee and other meetings.

Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB). Originally established in statute in 1969 as the Council on Higher Education. In 1975 the Legislature changed the membership, duties, and name to Council for Postsecondary Education. In 1985 the Legislature reconstituted the Council as the HECB. The HECB has ten members, appointed by the Governor, for the

purpose of coordinating the state's public colleges and universities. Additionally, the HECB administers state and federal financial aid.

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). The SBCTC was established in statute in 1967. There are nine members who are appointed by the Governor. The purpose of the SBCTC is to provide general supervision and control over the state system of 34 community and technical colleges. Additionally, the SBCTC has a number of specific statutory duties to fulfill.

**Summary of Bill:** Legislative findings are made that consolidation of state-level education entities result in a governance system with a unifying student-centered vision, common goals, shared priorities, and linked outcomes, improved outcomes for learners and less management burdens for local delivery systems.

The Department of Education (DOE) is created as an executive branch agency to focus education policy development on implementing education programs and services that promote student achievement. A governor-appointed transition team must complete a transition plan by January 1, 2012, to phase-in the DOE. Phase-in begins by July 1, 2012, when the PESB, the OEO, the WSSB, and the CDHL and their employees are transferred to the DOE; the DEL, the SBE, the HECB, and the SBCTC, are abolished as state agencies and the powers, duties, functions and employees are transferred to the DOE; and the ELAC and the WSSDA are abolished.

If a constitutional amendment abolishing the SPI is not ratified at the November 2011 general election then the SPI is housed within the DOE beginning July 1, 2012. The SPI must coordinate and collaborate with the DOE in carrying out many of the duties of the SPI and/or the DOE. The DOE must provide administrative support services for the SPI but the SPI may appoint a deputy, assistant superintendents, and other assistants and clerical help as are necessary to carry out the supervisory duties of the SPI. The statutory language that the SPI has supervision of all matters pertaining to public schools is retained.

If a constitutional amendment abolishing the SPI is ratified at the November 2011 general election then the SPI is abolished and the powers, duties, functions, and employees of the SPI are transferred to the DOE by January 16, 2013.

The head of the DOE is the Secretary of Education (Secretary), appointed by the Governor and subject to confirmation by the Senate. The Secretary is given specific statutory tasks, including developing and implementing a system-wide strategic plan that integrates four system goals specified in the act.

A P-20 Education Council is created to advise the Secretary. Its 11 members are appointed by the Governor representing early learning, K-12, community colleges, career and technical education, and university education.

The ESDs are to assist the DOE in performance of its duties. The authority to pay for membership in a statewide association for each the ESD board member is removed.

Technical changes are made. The Code Reviser must prepare legislation for the 2012 session to correct obsolete references resulting from the act.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on on February 1, 2011.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** From Hearing Held on February 2, 2011

PRO: Most of the jobs in the new economy will require a certificate of some sort or a college degree. Our educational system needs to change to meet those student needs. We need to strengthen the transition points where our students pass from one sector to the other: early learning to K-12 and K-12 to higher education. The status quo system is not working because we don't have a system – we have silos. Each silo has plans but it is not a seamless plan and often not with common goals, which makes our transition points very weak points. The system we create should have one strategic plan to support our students from birth to career and have a student focus. Our system must be able to respond to changes by sharing best practices and scaling up the best practices statewide, for example online textbooks. The only clear effective way to create system accountability is to be united and not fractured. We need a way for all kids to have a voice in a stable system of education.

CON: It doesn't matter who is in charge of education if there is no funding to support it. This distracts from the most important issue that should be discussed, which is how to fund education this year in light of the scarce resources.

OTHER: This is an important conversation to have. We are interested in reforming the education system but differ on the details. The current structure of our separate silos, which are focused on their individual missions and without sufficient coordination, makes innovation very difficult; but we don't know if one person would be able to successfully lead all the strands of education. Perhaps it should be done regionally. Money and resources are short, but achievement and accountability is improving. The timeline in this bill is very aggressive and such a complete overhaul of the education system requires more discussion.

We do not think WSSDA should be included in the bill because it does not contribute to the education bureaucracy and does not receive state funding. It also performs a role in accountability that will be lost if it is abolished. We are concerned with abolishing the SBE. By having school directors elect some of the members of the SBE, there is a balance of perspectives that will be lost in a Department with a Secretary who is appointed by the Governor. Maybe the SBE should be the P-20 Council. We support keeping PESB because it has practitioners making decisions about certification and licensing. If a P-20 Council is created then it should include school directors and educators. The SBCTC and SBE have worked very well.

Washington has a tradition of strong citizen involvement and this does not include sufficient citizen involvement in the system to provide balance to the executive power. If the SPI were

retained under this system their advocacy voice for students would be muted by this structure and become the voice of the Governor. We are concerned that the institutions would not retain their autonomy because best practices which are often experimental would be imposed upon them.

From Hearing Held on February 10, 2011

PRO: We need a comprehensive, streamlined, seamless education system that is coordinated with a focus on the students instead of the fragmented governing bodies that we currently have. When everything is under one umbrella there is more communication and collaboration, which will help us do better closing the achievement gap, keeping our students from dropping out of school, and reducing remediation at the higher education institutions. There should be one central point for accountability; so we support the constitutional amendment to eliminate the position of the elected SPI. We suggest that the PESB could also be transferred to the DOE. We like how the bill speaks to the transitions between early learning, K-12, and higher education.

CON: While we agree with streamlining the state level agencies we oppose this bill because the Secretary is appointed not elected by the people. Do not take away the right of citizens to elect a nonpartisan, independent education official that is separate from the Governor. We oppose dissolving the State Board of Education because it is the voice of the schools' boards. We are concerned that the transition will cause delay in the expansion and funding of basic education but if it will help facilitate the implementation then we are all for it.

OTHER: Higher education is very in favor of collaboration and coordination to assist students to be better prepared when they arrive. We are concerned with the surrender of local control for the public higher education institutions with all the centralization.

**Persons Testifying:** From Hearing Held on February 2, 2011

PRO: Christine Gregoire, Governor.

CON: Jerry Bender, Association of Washington of School Principals.

OTHER: Mary Fertakis, Marie Sullivan, Washington State School Directors' Association; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Tim Knue, Washington Association for Career and Technical Education; George Scarola, League of Education Voters; Dan Steele, Washington Association of School Administrators; Marsh Riddle Buly, Western Washington University Woodring College of Education; Anthony Flinn, Eastern Washington University.

From Hearing Held on February 10, 2011

PRO: Senator McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Ann Luce, Partnership for Learning.

CON: Tracy Zahn, Rich Halterman, Bridgeport School District; Catherine Ahl, League of Women Voters; Romana Hattendorf, Washington State PTA.

OTHER: George Scalia, League of Education Voters; Anthony Flinn, Eastern Washington University; David Westberg, Joint Council of Stationary Engineers.